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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8404
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0354
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0197
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0431
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0064

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SUBJECT: FIRE DESTROYS GHANA MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

¶1. (U) At about 17:00 local time on October 23, a fire gutted the ten story Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) building in central Accra. The structure and its contents, including historical documents dating back to Ghana's independence in 1957, were completely destroyed. The only reported injury was one fireman hurt by falling debris. The cause of the blaze is under investigation; however, one early press report said the that fire was caused by an electrical fault.

¶2. (U) Poloff was in the vicinity of the MFA shortly after the blaze started and reported that fire officials were not called until about 15 minutes after flames were visible from the outside of the building. Press reports quote officials saying that the fire service was slow in responding, and the three trucks that eventually arrived were unable to control the blaze. The Ghana Fire Service's hoses could not reach above the second floor.

¶3. (U) MGT Counselor had a previously scheduled routine meeting with the MFA Chief of Protocol on October 22. She was informed that she should go to the meeting anyway, not for the meeting but to show support. MGT Counselor met the Chief of Protocol in the parking lot of the building and reported that the building was burned out and gutted. Only the ground floor and part of the first floor were untouched.

¶4. (U) COMMENT: The GOG is still assessing the impact of the blaze and has not made any statement about short term MFA operations. Given the totality of the fire, Ministry officials have lost office facilities, documents, and communications capabilities. Until the GOG establishes a temporary arrangement for the Ministry to resume functioning, Embassy's ability to conduct business (including delivering demarches) with the MFA will be extremely limited. END COMMENT
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